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ABSTRACT

This study examined key factors contributing to the persistence of urban teachers who entered teaching through alternative certification programs. It explored how they constructed meanings from the processes, events, and relationships they experienced. Data came from a 1991-92 cohort of alternatively certified teachers who received tenure in 1994 or 1995 and were still in education in 1997-98. Teacher surveys and interviews indicated that teacher preparation factors contributing to teacher persistence included each component of the alternative route program consisting of pre-internship coursework and the internship experience. Participants recalled coursework as relevant and practical, transferred into short-term and long-term practice. They felt well-prepared and competent. As interns, participants forged strong relationships with their on-site mentors and each other. These relationships were critical in their development of professional skills and identity. Mentoring ensured daily contact with experienced teachers, who provided the emotional and technical support essential for developing competence and professional identity. The cohort relationship was particularly important in sustaining their commitment to the program. Relationships between cohort members were so strong that they continued into the inservice years, and several of the teachers reported continuing bonds with others in their cohorts 6 years into their teaching careers. (Contains 42 references.) (SM)

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# Why They Stay: Alternate Route Teachers' Perspectives on Their Decisions To Continue Teaching after the Induction Period.

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# LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF TEACHERS WHO STAY: KEY FACTORS IN PREPARING ALTERNATE ROUTE TEACHERS WHO REMAIN IN TEACHING

***I don't know what would make me leave teaching. I want to make an impact somehow. I have a real concern about girls--all girls but particularly African American girls, pre adolescent and adolescent. I also have a big concern about what multi-cultural education is and how people are doing it or not doing it. I also have a big concern for teaching teachers, urban teachers. . . . I also have a concern about community responsibility for raising our children, especially corporate responsibility. I have often thought that if I went back to corporate America, why and how would I do it? I would be just a thorn in their side right now. (Sharon)***

## The Problem

Developing and retaining a strong teaching force is a critical issue receiving increasing attention by policy makers across the country, particularly with the impending loss of a sizeable number of "baby boom" teachers nearing retirement age. Among the many related issues surrounding this topic are those of recruiting, training, and retaining teachers in urban schools. The current forecasts project a need for more than two million new teachers in the next 10 years (Archer, 1999; Feistritzer, 1999). By far the greatest shortages exist and are predicted to continue to exist in urban schools (Haberman, 1988; Zimpher, 1989; Heller, 1992; Stoddart, 1993; Finn, 1997). As Haberman says:

> There is no question that the teacher shortage is primarily an urban plight: the 120 largest school districts serving between 9 and 10 million youngsters have the greatest concentration of "at-risk" students; that is, those students whom teacher education graduates do not choose to teach. (1988, p. 38)

Historically, urban schools have experienced a persistent shortage of professionally educated teachers, no matter how many teachers were being prepared nationally. This problem manifests in the small number of new teacher education graduates who seek positions in urban schools, the large number of teachers who transfer out of the most difficult urban schools within districts, as well as in the number of teachers who leave urban schools to seek employment in suburban schools or in other occupations (Haberman, 1988). Several researchers have found that most teacher education graduates prefer to teach in suburban rather than urban schools (Book, Byers & Freeman, 1983; Haberman, 1988; Perkins, 1989; Stoddart, 1992). Zimpher (1989) found that, among teacher education graduates, more than half wanted to teach in suburbia. Another fourth wanted to teach in rural areas, and only 15% wanted to teach in urban areas. She concluded:

> Although shifts from suburban to rural teaching have appeared over the years, the lack of preference for an urban teaching job remains stable. When data from home upbringing are contrasted to geographical teaching preference, there appears a general affinity for teaching in communities of more familiarity, which in contrast appears negatively to affect the urban choice. More respondents report being from urban or major urban areas than are interested in returning to teach in them. (pp. 29-30)

One widespread response to this problem has been alternate route certification programs. The large numbers of alternate route programs in urban areas attest to the presumed viability of such programs to provide additional teachers to staff urban schools that are plagued by high turnover rates. According to Zumwalt,

> Alternative certification is viewed as an answer to endemic shortages of qualified urban teachers. Certified teachers generally prefer or find it easier to get hired in suburban or urban middle-class schools, leaving many urban schools staffed by emergency licensed teachers who have high attrition rates. Alternative certification attracts more diverse, mature, academically able teachers, it is argued, who want to teach in urban schools, are more likely to be successful, and are more likely to stay there, breaking the cycles of high turnover. (1996, p. 41)

Retaining teachers prepared in alternate route programs is critical, then, particularly in urban schools. The investment of teacher preparation programs and urban districts in alternate route programs is futile, if the newly prepared teachers abandon teaching.

Yet, some studies on the retention of teachers prepared in alternate route programs indicate that even these teachers do not remain in urban schools. As reported by Zumwalt:

> Although initially more likely to teach in urban schools either because of personal choice or necessity, there is little evidence indicating that alternative certification teachers are less likely to flee urban schools or are generally more responsive to the needs of urban students. Much depends on their personal histories and the nature of their abbreviated preparation programs. There is some evidence that some alternatively certified teachers, not having been exposed to anything but their own schooling and their current job, may have more traditional views than graduates of college programs. (1996, p. 42)

The longevity of alternatively prepared teachers becomes, then, an important consideration for those advocates of this strategy for increasing the teaching force. It is especially important for policy makers who see this method as one way to address the issue of providing a stable work force for urban schools. For policy makers and teacher educators a question that needs to be answered is what can be done to increase the probability that the alternate route teachers whose contracts are renewed will remain in the schools that hired them. In short, what can we learn from the graduates of alternate route programs that may increase persistence of teachers in urban schools? The purpose of this paper is to present a portion of a larger study that examined multiple factors in the retention of urban teachers prepared in alternate route programs. This paper will focus on teacher preparation factors.

## Methodology

The purpose of this study was to discover the key factors contributing to the persistence of urban teachers who entered teaching through an alternate route certification program. Rather than simply discovering what individual teachers think or believe, my purpose was to explore how these teachers constructed meanings from the processes, events, and relationships they experienced and to identify common themes among them. A qualitative method was used in order to provide a "thick, rich" description of factors in relation to the teacher preparation frameworks of antecedent, teacher education, and in-service, as well as the theoretical framework of career decision-making. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted and inductive data analysis was used to develop theory from the data. A cross-case analysis was conducted to identify themes of persistence.

In the body of research in this area, the voices of the teachers have, by and large, been silent. Very few studies have examined the critical incidents, relationships, and processes that influence new alternate route teachers to remain in their teaching positions or to seek employment elsewhere. This study sought to explore career decision-making, a process that has been examined primarily through quantitative methods, resulting in limited knowledge about the actual experiences of and meanings for individuals. According to Spokane (1990),

> We should study what people actually do in their day-to-day lives, not what they respond to on an inventory, or indicate they wish they could do, or might do in the future. . . . What is needed are measures of what people do in the face of difficult environmental barriers, not what they promise to do, prefer to do, or hope to do. (p. 32)

My goal was to learn from alternate route teachers who actually stayed in teaching.

### Sources of Data

The source of data for this study was a 1991-92 alternate route cohort—individuals who completed an alternate route certification program during the 1991-92 school year, received tenure in 1994 or 1995, and were still in education during the 1997-98 school year. Following the criterion-based sampling schema developed by Goetz and LeCompte (1984), I used "ideal-typical or bellweather-case selection," which involves finding a real-world case that most closely matches the profile of "an instance that would be the best . . . or most desirable of some population" (p. 82). The sample for the study was drawn from the 13 teachers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, who completed their alternate route teacher preparation program during the 1991-92 school year. In the population from which I sought participants for the study, every individual who completed the alternate route program was still working in urban schools a full five years after completing the program, according to information from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning.

## Data Collection

### Instrumentation

Instrumentation for this study included three components: 1) a participant information questionnaire completed by each participant. 2) in-depth phenomenological interviews using an interview guide; 3) the "human instrument" skills of the researcher.

The case study methodology I used employed focused, in-depth interviewing. As described by Seidman (1991), this process uses primarily open-ended questions, with the goal being the reconstruction of participants' experiences. The most distinguishing of all its features is that this model involves conducting a series of three separate 90-minute interviews with each participant, approximately 3 days to one week apart. The first interview establishes the context of the participant's experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurred. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them.

To structure interviews for this study, I prepared an interview guide organized around the conceptual frameworks of teacher education (antecedent, teacher education, and in-service) and career development concepts. The guide ensured that I covered the same issues for each participant and that I was able to focus my attention on the interviewees. Generally, the guide was organized to elicit stories related to antecedent factors, teacher education or process factors, and in-service factors of the participants' career development as a teacher.

## Data Analysis

Using the verbatim transcripts of the recorded interviews, I used inductive data analysis procedures, drawing upon the conceptual frameworks of teacher education and career development. The objective was to determine the categories, relationships, and assumptions that informed the participants' views of how they came to be urban educators and made decisions to remain in teaching. Initially, within-case analysis assisted in understanding through description and explanation. Cross-case analysis was then completed.

## Findings

### The Alternate Route Program

Within specific guidelines of the Minnesota Board of Teaching, the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts and faculty from an urban university collaboratively designed and delivered all aspects of the program, including intern selection, instruction, and supervision. The state specified the requirements for entry into the program:

> To participate in the program, a candidate must:
> - be hired by a school district:
> - have a bachelor's degree;
> - pass Pre-Professional Skills Tests in reading, writing, and mathematics;
> - have experience in a field related to the subject to be taught; and
> - document successful experiences working with children. (Feistritzer & Chester, 1991, p. 127)

The program, referred to by the pseudonym PAL for this study, featured pre-internship course work, a year-long supervised internship, and weekly evening courses during the internship year. Experienced teacher mentors supervised the interns; Minneapolis interns were assigned to work with mentors in the mentors' classrooms, while St. Paul interns were assigned to their own classrooms, under the indirect supervision of their mentors. All who completed the program were elementary teachers, and all were minorities. The four women and two men who participated in the study entered the alternate route program at ages ranging from 28 to 45. The mean age was 35.8. Information about their backgrounds appears in Table 1.

Table 1
Participant Information

| | Grace | Carol | Daniel | Mary | Mike | Sharon |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Birthplace** | Joliet, Illinois | Selma, Alabama | Wollega, Ethiopia | Minneapolis | New York City | Minneapolis |
| **Age entered Alternate Route Program** | 45 | 31 | 43 | 28 | 31 | 37 |
| **Marital status** | Married | Married | Married | Single | Single | Married |
| **Children** | 9 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| **Undergraduate Preparation** | Minnesota Public | Alabama Public | Minnesota Public | Minnesota Private | California Private | Minnesota Private |
| **Undergraduate Major** | Social Work | Speech Pathology | Soil Science | Psychology, Family Studies, Child Dev. | Psychology | Urban Studies (Minor-Educ) |

All of the teachers described antecedent, teacher preparation, and in-service factors that influenced their long-term commitment to stay in teaching. Teacher preparation factors will be the focus of this paper.

## Teacher Preparation Program

### Course Work

***The professors seemed to be modeling what they expected us to do. In addition to teaching us what was in the curriculum, they tended to model. (Daniel)***

#### Pre Internship Course Work

One of the standard requirements of traditional and alternate route teacher preparation programs is the completion of formal classes in education. The number of hours varies among alternate route programs, but in the PAL program participants began attending college classes the summer prior to beginning their internship year and continued throughout the school year. From June 10-August 19, 1991, according to Osnes, Nielsen, and Mortinson (1992, p. 9), participants completed five semester credits in the following classes:

Essential Elements of Education and Clinical [Experience]

Human Relations and Multicultural Education

Developmental Reading

Teaching Mathematics in the Elementary School

General Methods for Elementary [Teaching] and Clinical [Experience]

Additional course work was completed as part of the internship requirement, described in the next section.

#### Internship Course Work

One evening each week, the interns attended classes in curricular areas such as science, social studies, music, art, communication skills, physical education, substance abuse, public health, interdisciplinary teaching, health, child growth and development, and first aid (Osnes, Nielsen, & Mortinson, 1992, p. 9). Among the standard complaints of teachers in general regarding their formal preparation are that the courses are unchallenging, culturally unresponsive, and result in little, if any, transfer into the classroom (Evertson, et. al., 1985; Hood & Parker, 1994; Lortie, 1975; Rashid, 1990). A different attitude toward course work emerged from the stories of the participants in this study. They described a curriculum that was relevant, well-taught, applicable, and transferred into their current practice.

Words like "challenging," "exciting," "awesome," "helpful," and "valuable" were used by these participants to describe their education classes. Why did they view their classes this way? Their

comments elaborating on their classes revealed a positive reaction to the course content, instructors, teaching methods, and direct and long-term applicability to their own classroom situations. Course content was generally viewed as practical, because it focused on subjects, materials, and methods they could use immediately. Their comments in Table 2 indicate the content they remembered as particularly helpful.

Table 2
Relevance of Course Content

| Name | Relevance of course content |
|---|---|
| Grace | We had lots--a lot of guest speakers that would come in and bring materials, especially in reading and math. We received the most recent ideas. |
| Carol | There was a lot of emphasis on the diversity issue. Not necessarily ethnicity diversity, but diversity in the students you would be able to teach. You had to use hands-on as versus visual. . . . When we got to class specific--like social studies and science--for science we went to a school, and there was a science teacher there that taught us science methods. |
| Daniel | Many of them were good educational topics like diversity, multicultural. . . learning theories, which was new for me. That really excited me. |
| Mary | We were given a bunch of different teaching methods. Using those methods, we chose one method each, and we did a math or reading lesson on it. And throughout the entire program we would do different lessons. It was advised that we would go back to those different methods and choose one and decide how it is we are going to bring this information across to the students. . . . The methodology classes were the best, because it keeps me going back and finding things that will make my teaching new to my students. |
| Mike | I remember human relations, theories of cognition, developmental psychology and methods courses. . . I do remember taking a course in music, art, phy ed. Being exposed to reading units and math units, incentives, little kind of supplemental activities you could do when your class was waiting in line. Those types of little fun things. I remember being exposed to all of those things. I remember learning anticipatory set and doing the webbing. |
| Sharon | Social studies . . . The type of story telling we could do--that kind of thing. That was really helpful. . . And the multi-cultural. We did have a module on that. And that was really important. For me, that helped me a lot. |

In addition to subject matter coverage in the basic areas of reading, math, social studies, and science, the participants also mentioned the special subjects of art, music, and physical education as memorable and helpful. However, the content most remembered and valued were general and specific teaching methods.

The participants in the PAL program, remembered their instructors as effective teachers, particularly if the lessons involved hands-on learning and if the teachers modeled effective instructional practices, as indicated in the comments in Table 3.

Table 3
Description of College Teaching Methods

| Name | Description of college teaching methods |
|---|---|
| Grace | And we were not only lectured to, we were able to participate. And we had to do projects in classes |
| Carol | Basically, you modeled best practices for teaching students. . . the instructor taught us the way he/she wanted us to interact with our students. So it wasn't getting up saying, "When you teach fractions, it is best to use a hands-on approach." No, they brought out the cuisenaire rods and said, "This is the way you create a lesson" and had us create lessons . . . and come back in and model them for the whole class. |
| Daniel | The professors seemed to be modeling what they expected us to do. In addition to teaching us what was in the curriculum, they tended to model. Like when they wanted to teach you about students constructing their own knowledge, they put things out there, and, instead of telling us what was up, they tried to pry it out of us. We needed to figure out what we thought was going on. Group activities to work in groups. |
| Mary | She expected you to actually have a part in your learning. Her thing was that for your end project you had to show how you learned or where you've come from and where you are now. |
| Mike | Some were lectures, some were lectures and doing, some were more practice than lecture. It was a good mix. |
| Sharon | Everything we got from that year that was hands-on was very valuable. . . . the methods classes, like math, were all hands-on. I don't remember anything but hands-on in math. And, yeah, she would bring manipulatives to every math class. She'd always have a different way--she'd have a particular strand--maybe it was teaching something in geometry, and so she'd always have enough manipulatives for all of us, and we'd do a particular problem in geometry. . . . she had a lot of great strategies, she brought in a lot of books, and she had us do a lot of interesting different kinds of things for reading, which was helpful . . . there was hands-on. |

It is clear from these statements that the future teachers in this study respected and learned from teachers who modeled best practices in teaching. In some cases, they watched master teachers work with students and systematically observed the strategies they used. In other cases, they were taught by teachers who employed best practice strategies in their own teaching. In fact, the participants all recalled active, hands-on learning. This included doing projects (Grace, Mary, Sharon), creating

lessons and teaching them to the class (Carol, Mary), participating in group activities (Daniel, Sharon), observing teachers (Grace, Daniel), practicing (Mike), and working out math problems using manipulatives (Sharon).

## Transfer of Training From Course Work Into Classrooms

Perhaps the most critical element in teacher preparation is the transfer of training from college course work into classroom practice. Unlike the subjects of previous studies (Evertson, et. al., 1985; Hood & Parker, 1994; Lortie, 1975; Rashid, 1990), who indicated that transfer of training into practice was minimal or non-existent, the participants in this study were able to recall short and long-term transfer of training. Table 4 indicates short-term transfer.

Table 4
Short-term Transfer of Training from College Course Work

| Name | Short-term transfer of training |
|---|---|
| Grace | The information that you received one day or two days or the week before--then you go in and apply it. |
| Carol | The units, the writing of lesson plans, applying the theory you get into the classroom to the real life situations. I mean, the chance to practice that every day. |
| Daniel | During the whole time there were things that you had to do independently. You know, go out and dig it out, and come teach it to a class. . . . we had to gather the information and put a lesson plan together and teach it. . . |
| Mary | We each had to put together interdisciplinary lessons, across disciplines and across grade levels, so we were able to see the thread or the theme of education going throughout. . . . We had to do a thematic unit, using the semantic feature analysis or those different methods, so that you know one, how to use them and two, how to make use of or draw a thread of learning through a particular lesson, but make sure it hits every discipline. |
| Mike | All the time I taught I would sit on Sunday evening and write my lesson plans for the week. It was a discipline, because if I didn't, I could fly for awhile, but your kids are not going to benefit from that. . . where do you want to go with this? Where is it going to be when you are finished? What should the kids be able to do and show you? |
| Sharon | What was really valuable was doing it, you know, when you had to face it every day. |

That the participants in this study were teaching while attending classes made transferring what they were learning into practice an almost immediate occurrence. Immediately being able to put into practice what they learned in their evening classes reinforced the relevance of these courses.

Short-term transfer seemed a logical outcome of the course work, but these participants also were able to identify specific things they learned in their courses that they were still using a full five years later. Table 5 indicates long-term transfer of training.

Table 5
Long Term Transfer of Training from College Course Work

| Name | Long-term transfer of training |
|---|---|
| Grace | I can't think of a class that really did not benefit me. |
| Carol | I think, of all the course work, this whole issue of all the students are not the same when they come through that door. And that part of being a continuous learner is trying different things with the students, until you find what works best for that student. I probably took that too far. Sometimes it is exhausting. I never give up. |
| Daniel | That summer one of the classes I took . . . was my first introduction to multicultural areas and diversity issues. I still use the book from that class. That class was very good. |
| Mary | The methodology classes were the best, because it keeps me going back and finding things that will make my teaching new to my students. If I bore myself, I know I am boring the students. I can get bored, and there are days when I try to write something on the overhead, and I am yawning. I draw on what I learned in the methodology classes. |
| Mike | The lesson writing. Just the putting down on paper a sequence of events in your classroom that are supposed to happen. I think if you don't do that you just are flying by the seat of your pants. |
| Sharon | Social studies . . . the kind of techniques she taught us that we could use I still use. The strategies we could use to teach things. . . That was really helpful. [Topics most important in my own teaching have been] probably, oh, oh, probably the (long pause) general methods probably, where we talked a lot about management and organization--yeah. |

Addressing individual differences (Carol, Daniel, Sharon), general teaching methodologies (Mary, Mike, Sharon), and lesson design (Mike), as well as a general feeling of being benefited by the course work (Grace) are areas which these participants said transferred into their current practice. The solid, practical knowledge base with which the interns entered teaching provided them with a level of competence that served them over the first six years of their teaching careers.

## Classroom Practicum

In addition to attending weekly classes, the internship also required each intern to complete a practicum, working under the supervision of an internship team. Combining a mixture of professional practice, university instruction, and collaborative school and university supervision and evaluation,

the internship provided each intern with a bridge between their academic preparation and the real world of the classroom. Giving them a longer, more closely supervised practicum than the traditional student teaching experience, the internship more closely resembled those described in the literature on internships in teaching and in other professions (Johnson, Ratsoy, Holdaway, & Friesen, 1993).

The internships varied in length. Some interns were reassigned to another school, classroom, or mentor as the year progressed. Table 6 shows a comparison of the internship assignments for each of the participants.

Table 6
Internship Assignments

| Name | City | School | Per Cent Minority | Grade | No. months |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grace | St. Paul | Kennedy | 55% | 2 | 9 |
| Carol | St. Paul | Kennedy | 55% | 5 | 9 |
| Daniel | Minneapolis | Madison Open | 33% | 4,5,6 | 5 |
| | Minneapolis | Armstrong | NA | 2 | 4 |
| Mary | Minneapolis | Woodley | 40% | 2 | 6 |
| | | Woodley | 40% | 1 | 3 |
| Mike | Minneapolis | Dayton | 50% | 6 | 7 |
| | | Lewis | NA | 6 | 2 |
| Sharon | Minneapolis | Madison Open | 33% | 3/4 | 1.5 |
| | Minneapolis | Madison Open | 33 % | 4/5 | 7.5 |

In St. Paul, the interns assumed full teaching responsibilities immediately, with regular assistance from a mentor who taught another class in the same building. Minneapolis interns were given internships designed to provide them with gradually increasing levels of classroom teaching responsibilities, assisted by a full-time mentor working in the same classroom with them. In addition to being observed and assisted by their mentors, all interns were also observed by their district's PAL coordinator and school principals, as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7
Frequency of Meetings with Support Team Members

| Name | Mentor | Principal | District PAL coordinator |
|---|---|---|---|
| Grace | Daily | 1/wk | 1/month |
| Carol | Daily | 1/wk | 1 or 2/wk |
| Daniel | Daily | "occasionally" | 1/wk |
| Mary | Daily | 4 | 1/month |
| Mike | Daily | 6 | 4 |
| Sharon | Daily | 2 | 1/month |

Teachers in general cite student teaching as the most valuable aspect of their preparation (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1986; Hawley, 1990; Johnston, 1994; Lortie, 1975). The value, according to aspiring teachers, is that the student teaching experience gives them opportunities to learn from the modeling of their supervising teacher, from personal experience, from developing routines, and from learning from their own trial and error. (Johnston, 1994). Practicing on-site, in urban schools coached by experienced urban teachers is an important factor in the preparation of alternate route teachers, according to Haberman (1991, cited in Dill, 1996). The longer practicum required of the participants in this study (one year versus one or two quarters), provided a range of experiences that they felt were beneficial and had transfer into their own classrooms the following year.

## Mentoring

***You know, when I was introduced to the idea of the mentor, that sort of stuck with me. The supportive type of thing . . . Up to that point, school was for me an end. You know . . . it was completely controlled, and people looked for your weakness. . . . I started looking at this and started trying to concentrate on my strength. That gave me--made me more of a positive person. (Daniel)***

Mentoring played a central role in the field experiences of the participants in the PAL program. An analysis of the interviews revealed that mentoring served multiple purposes for these interns, as suggested in the literature on mentoring. Among the outcomes of mentoring, improvement of teaching performance, the facilitation of transfer of knowledge from teacher education, the promotion of personal and professional well-being, and socialization to the institutional culture occurred for the participants in this study.

What the participants in this study remembered most about their mentors was that their mentors were approachable (Grace), knowledgeable about educational theory and practice (Carol), respected by parents (Carol), energetic (Daniel), concerned about diversity (Sharon), innovative

(Sharon), organized (Mike, Sharon), and, most importantly, skilled and caring in working with students (Carol, Daniel, Mary Sharon). If these were the attributes most noted by the interns, what, exactly, did the mentors do that helped the interns learn to become teachers?

First, the mentors were available and had regular contact with the interns. Grace and Carol's mentors, who had full-time teaching assignments of their own in other classrooms, observed their interns once or twice each week. The four Minneapolis interns spent each day with their mentor, and when they started teaching, their mentors observed them daily. Furthermore, all of the interns reported feeling that their mentors were always approachable. Grace said that she met with her mentor once a week, or more frequently, "if I needed something." The other interns reported similar regular contact with their mentors, as indicated in Table 8:

Table 8
Frequency of Interns' Contact with their Mentors

| Name | Frequency of contact |
|---|---|
| Grace | She just allowed me to ask for what I needed when I needed it. |
| Carol | We talked every day. We would both get to school at 7:30-8:00 in the morning. I would be in her room, or she would be in mine, talking. I don't think our prep was the same. Our lunch wasn't the same. We would see each other after school. We'd walk our kids up to the buses. Even if I had my prep and she didn't, and I needed something, I could go over there and talk to her quickly while she wasn't teaching. . . She was there when I needed her, but she didn't crowd me. We would try to meet once a week. |
| Daniel | I presented my lesson plan, and we talked quite a bit. She did a lot more observing of me than the previous teacher . . . We did quite a bit of pulling down books from shelves and looking through, and we did that together quite a bit. |
| Mary | Well, she was always there for me if I needed her. I would just call her. |
| Mike | [My mentor] helped just by being there to let me share things with him. |
| Sharon | We talked it out. We really planned a lot together. We spent--I remember we spent a full day at the multicultural lab at Andersen together. . . but we talked through things all the time. |

Unlike the new urban teachers in Shulman's study (1989), whose help-seeking depended upon the proximity and common assignments of their mentors, Grace saw her mentor weekly or more frequently, and Carol saw her mentor daily, even though both mentors taught different grades in classrooms some distance from those of their interns. The benefits of the daily contact the Minneapolis interns had with their mentors are clear in terms of the trusting relationships that were forged. Also, it is significant that each mentor worked with only one intern during the year, unlike

those in the Teach for Chicago program, in which mentors were assigned to work with four interns, thus diminishing their ability to act as instructional leaders for the interns. (Knauth & Kamin, 1994).

That the mentoring relationship may increase retention has been reported in the literature related to traditional teacher preparation (Kennedy, 1991; Odell & Ferraro, 1992), as well as in the literature on alternate route preparation (Knauth & Kamin, 1994). In fact, as Knauth and Kamin reported, one of the satisfiers for alternate route teachers is the mentor as a source for learning about teaching. If that is the case, what and how did the alternate route teachers in this study learn from their mentors? An analysis of their memories of their mentors indicates that mentors fulfilled the five main roles described by Anderson and Shannon (1988). According to Anderson and Shannon, the primary roles of the mentor are to teach, sponsor, encourage, counsel, and befriend.

Perhaps the most important influence of mentoring on a beginning teacher is the degree to which the new teacher adopts practices learned from the mentor. In this study, although the interns all saw themselves as different from their mentors, they also were able to describe teaching practices that they integrated into their own practice. Despite their differences, most interns could readily identify practices they adopted from their mentors for use in their own classrooms. Table 9 indicates the practices that interns took with them into their own teaching.

Table 9
Teaching Practices Interns Adapted from their Mentor

| Name | Teaching practices adapted from mentors |
|---|---|
| Daniel | [From my first mentor] I learned teamwork and . . . team curriculum. . . She, in a very casual way laid out the day for the kids in the meetings. That is one of the things I learned from her. If you came to my room you'd never think anything is planned. Things just sort of work, and I put that in there through my morning meetings, and things seem to just fall into place, because they happen to be that way. You know, really, it is the way she plans, and I borrowed that from her. |
| Mary | I learned from observing her, how to interact with the students. . . .I did learn to interact with the students on a one-to-one level. |
| Mike | Mechanics. Movement. . . there is a way a teacher walks around a classroom. There are things that teachers do, a way a teacher stands, speaks and listens. I've been around teachers and been around a classroom, but I still needed to know those things. I needed to observe someone who was experienced at doing those things. That is really what I learned from him. . . . [Also] for sure the way he taught spelling. He had this way of putting up the schedule on the board every day that I did as well. |
| Sharon | The planning, the thinking through of curriculum that--where there's no curriculum established. You know, like our reading program that we have in our school. There is a structure established--and it really helps when you're planning. . . . I really learned a lot from how she thought through things.. |

That mentoring can have a long-range impact on interns was indicated in a study by Odell (1990), who found that teachers in their fourth year who had participated in a mentored induction reported a continuing positive influence of their mentors. The participants in this study also had positive feelings toward and memories about their mentors six years after completing their internships, as indicated in Table 10.

Table 10
What the Interns Valued in the Mentorship

| Name | What the interns valued in the mentorship |
|---|---|
| Grace | It gave me a feeling of security that I knew there was someone . . . I could plug into, should I need some help. . . . I saw my mentor as someone . . . I could count on to give me information when I was not sure what to do or how to do it |
| Carol | I loved her. . . We would sit down and talk about things. What we thought about different ways of teaching kids and, in some cases, we didn't agree. We could share. We learned from each other. I liked the fact that she thought she could learn from me. . . . She thought I helped her grow, and I know she helped me grow. |
| Daniel | You know, when I was introduced to the idea of the mentor, that sort of stuck with me. The supportive type of thing . . . Up to that point, school was for me an end. You know . . . it was completely controlled, and people looked for your weakness. . . . I started looking at this and started trying to concentrate on my strength. That gave me--made me more of a positive person. |
| Mary | Well, she was always there for me if I needed her. |
| Mike | I would say he helped my confidence. He was very encouraging. He was extremely patient. He was a great teacher, and I think you learn some things from observing and some by osmosis. I think just being around someone who was that good, you have no choice but to pick up things, if you have a mind set to learn. |
| Sharon | [She] gave me the freedom to make mistakes. Worked with me as a partner. Valued the experience I brought, even though I didn't really have any except for my age and being a parent and being in corporate America. . . We had a really good relationship. We stayed in touch with each other for three years after that. And still even now, we talk to each other through other people |

The qualities these mentors possessed made them particularly effective teachers, coaches, and mediators into the school and community culture for the potential urban teachers. Possessing an experiential knowledge base as well as a theoretical one, these mentors were capable of assisting the interns transition effectively into urban classrooms. Similar to the teacher educator recommended by Haberman (1991, reported in Dill, 1996), the mentors were "capable of coaching candidates' actual teaching behavior and of modeling best practices" (Dill, 1996, p. 949).

## Internship Teaching

***When you first start teaching you want to do so well that you want to overdo it. I probably overdid it. I learned. It is somewhere between here and here. You know, between Robin Williams and catatonic. (Mike)***

Gaining skills in teaching is the most important goal of an internship. An analysis of the interview data indicated that, during their year-long internship, the participants in this study exhibited a shift in their concerns as they gradually assumed and completed greater responsibilities for teaching. This is similar to the findings of Sandlin, Young, and Karge (1993), who found that, among the top ten concerns of interns at the end of a year, five were impact concerns, while only four were self concerns and three were task concerns.

Not all of the interns in this study assumed gradual teaching responsibilities. Grace and Carol had their own classrooms from the beginning. And even among the four who started out with a year-long supervised internship, two (Mary and Mike) completed the internship early and accepted full-time teaching assignments before the academic year was over. However, the descriptions of their teaching responsibilities over the course of the year and their feelings about their responsibilities reveal an evolving pattern from self concerns to impact concerns; that is, from concerns about daily survival to concerns about one's ability to be successful with students and the teaching/learning process (Sandlin, Young, & Karge, 1993). Table 11 includes the interns' descriptions of their initial internship responsibilities and concerns.

Table 11
Initial Concerns

| Name | Initial concerns | Category |
|---|---|---|
| Grace | The one big thing that frightened me about having my own classroom was how do you set it up. How do you arrange the desks? How do you do these things? Most people would say that's a given. You just go in. But it's not like that. | Self |
| | That summer I had such nightmares of how will I remember those children's names. That was my real big fear, after setting up the room, how will I remember them? | Self |
| | I was stressed out a little bit, because it seemed like I couldn't get everything I wanted to do done within the time frame. I didn't understand the time allotment sheet that we have to fill out every year that says you are teaching this many minutes of this and that many minutes of that, and how I could work that in. . . . that first year--those first few days--I was like, "What am I supposed to be teaching now?" I mean there's so much paper work, and I've gotta do this and do that. And do I give homework now? | Task |

(table continues)

| Name | Initial concerns | Category |
|---|---|---|
| Carol | I went in, and I looked around the room, and I thought, "What am I doing?" I was fortunate that I was in a school where people supported me. "Here, you can have this. You can do this." I was one day ahead of my students. | Self |
| | I thought, my God. First of all to get here I have to be really really ready to address the needs of all these kids. I am in charge of the challenge of educating these 29 kids. | Impact |
| | My first day someone came in and said "We have this IEP meeting." I'm saying, "What? OK, they aren't all the same in here. They don't all look the same, they don't all have the same needs, and I have to be able to address each of these kid's individual needs. I can't just teach them all the same thing. Some of these kids already know it, some of them don't." And the complexity of the job--I was just floored. I found some of the kids were special ed. I think I knew that, but to be responsible for them, the sole person. It was an overwhelming task. | Impact |
| | One of my biggest challenges was staying ahead of my kids, especially in regards to content knowledge. | Task |
| Carol | I'm telling you, I thought I was going to crack that first year. . . . I was taking it a day at a time. I was literally one step ahead of some of my kids. | Task |
| Daniel | The first day there was something for me to do, and sometimes there was so much to do that I didn't get to do my classroom assignment that I was supposed to observe. | Task |
| | The biggest challenge for me was . . . to plan for a week. You can never plan enough, and I thought, "Oh, there is always plenty to do." When you have the whole week to plan for, and . . . you are through the first two days, and then you know you are scrambling to fill the time. | Task |
| Mary | I did learn to interact with the students on a one-to-one level. For some strange reason, right off the bat, I was getting down on my knees or crouching down, so I could help them, without being that towering figure, drop down to their levels. Try to find something fun in what they do. If they say something that is supposed to be funny, laugh. If they said something that should not have been said, don't laugh. Wait until later. | Task |

(table continues)

| Name | Initial concerns | Category |
|---|---|---|
| Mary | Oh, boy, I finally get to do this. Oh goodness, the whole day is mine. What am I supposed to do with them all day long? I had never taught for an entire day by myself. . . Boy, was I scared. | Self |
| Mike | Nervous. I was perspiring and one of the kids said, "Mr. Johnson you are sweating." I said, "Thanks for pointing that out." But, yeah, real nervous. When you first start teaching you want to do so well that you want to overdo it. I probably overdid it. I learned. It is somewhere between here and here. You know, between Robin Williams and catatonic. | Self |
| Sharon | I went through the transition of building the same kind of respect that the kids had for Caroline. That took a couple of weeks. Caroline's style is different than mine. At that time she was a lot more firm; she didn't play. I was more laid back and kind of ready to listen to the kids. . . . Some of them were walking all over me, and I didn't know how to handle that. | Self |

While the interns started out with high levels of self and task concerns, they completed their internships with the major focus of their concerns on their students and the teaching/learning process, as indicated in Table 12.

Table 12
Exit Level Concerns

| Name | Exit level concerns | Category |
|---|---|---|
| Grace | I had a sense of working with children who were difficult. | Impact |
| | I saw myself as more of a thematic, whole language hands-on kind of teacher. | Task |
| Carol | The math part wasn't a big deal, but the reading and social studies, knowing how to teach it, and having kids in my class who I swear their IQ was higher than mine. They would just absorb it. At night I am trying to stay just one step ahead of them to keep them challenged and try to find something in a pre-algebra book to have one kid doing . . . and something for my kids who read at the seventh grade level . . . I would still be working with kids who read at a second grade level. | Impact |
| | I felt confident when the parents of those bright kids came into my classroom. They liked the fact that I was giving their child more challenging material to read. They liked that the child grew academically on the MAT 7 test, that I pre-tested their child on everything that we covered. | Impact |

(table continues)

| Name | Exit level concerns | Category |
|---|---|---|
| Carol | It was Godawful in the time it took. I think it was for the best. I wouldn't have felt like I was doing what I could for the kids in my classroom if I hadn't. . . . It was hard, but good teaching is. | Impact |
| Mary | I told them I was going to be their teacher, I wasn't going to leave. We were going to learn. They would ask what we were going to learn. I said science, art, math, reading. . . . They were working, not loud, engaged in what they are doing. | Impact |
| Mike | I guess my thing was to try to come in and build a relationship with the students first. . . . When I say I wanted to build a relationship with the kids first that was first and foremost. | Impact |
| Sharon | at the end I did a unit that I called Journeys--an interdisciplinary unit . . . It was an in-depth piece. We did a lot of field trips and that kind of thing. The kids really gained a lot from it, and it came out in the letters they wrote me and the send-off they gave me. . . I can picture the kids still outside doing the finishing project of the whole unit. The kids were painting their own journey stories . . . All those murals, that is the picture I have in my mind. The kids painting on the sidewalk. . . the students were so engaged. I thought that was how things were supposed to be. They were really engaged with that, more so than with anything we did that year. | Impact |

Similar to the beginning teachers in Thies-Sprinthall and Gerler's study (1990), these interns moved from self concerns to student concerns. The interns in this program completed their internship confident in their own management, planning and survival skills and focusing clearly on student outcomes and making decisions based on promoting learning. It is reasonable to assume that teachers who enter the classroom with a sense of confidence in their abilities and a focus on learning have a greater possibility of experiencing the kind of success that contributes to persistence in teaching.

## Influence of the Cohort

***My cohort was very important. I would not have made it through without them. We were going through the same thing together. We gave each other support, spiritually and emotionally, to not give up. (Sharon)***

The cohort in which the individuals in this program participated became more than a support group that helped them address their teaching concerns and move along the continuum from self concerns to student concerns (Thies-Sprinthall & Gerler, 1990). The individuals who were selected to participate in the program took their initial summer classes and many of their electives together. Most

of them were paired with another member of the cohort in their internship schools. And they met one evening every week for 3 1/2 hours to debrief and complete non-credit classes. The close bonds that united the interns were universally acknowledged as one of the most important factors of the preparation program. Confirming the findings of other research studies (Fox & Singletary, 1986; Hawk & Schmidt, 1989; Knauth & Kamin, 1994; Lortie,1975; Thies-Sprinthall & Gerler, 1990), the participants in this study revealed the impact of the cohort in minimizing feelings of isolation, fostering trust, and developing collegial patterns of behavior and occupational identity through the "shared ordeal."

Among the functions served by the cohort, many members indicated that the cohort provided the context of a "shared ordeal," as indicated in Table 13.

Table 13
The Cohort Function of the Shared Ordeal

| Name | Examples of the shared ordeal |
|---|---|
| Grace | We studied together . . . we cried together . . . I made them pray together. . . |
| Carol | We would call each other every night and cry. . . . We could get up and share amongst ourselves things we might not have wanted to share with [the program coordinators]. . . . It was great to be part of that group. Here were people who had decided to go into education and had make some sacrifices. . . . In many cases we were helping each other to think of ways to survive. |
| Mike | [What I gained was] the sense of support and kind of togetherness that comes from going through something as a group. . . . I would say just the camaraderie and the feeling of going through something together that was difficult. |
| Sharon | To be able to be in a cohort with a group of people that had all basically done the same thing--taken a risk and left their lives behind them to do something that they felt so completely committed to, and to be--to have that commonality amongst us, and to have the commonality of struggle amongst us--said a lot. . . We were going through the same thing together. We gave each other support, spiritually and emotionally, to not give up. . . . When someone was down, being able to talk about it, and why, and raising that person's spirits. Just reminding each other why we were here, as difficult as it was. |

One by-product of sharing this kind of intense experience, "the commonality of struggle" as Sharon called it, is that it reduces the sense of isolation so frequently mentioned by novice teachers. For these interns, isolation was addressed in their cohort relationships, as indicated in Table 14.

Table 14
The Cohort Function of Reducing Isolation

| Name | Ways in which cohort reduced isolation |
|---|---|
| Grace | You really learn how to become one another's burden bearers, because there were financial things we did for each other. And I like to cook, so oftentimes I became that person. |
| Carol | We were all supporting one another. . . . I liked what PAL would do every time we got together for our classes. They would give us a time to de-brief, just talk. . . It created kind of a group, a cohesive group. . . . That was the first time I had an experience of working that closely with a group of people going to school. I'd never heard of the cohort model. When I went to college I took a class when it was available. Maybe a friend was in it and maybe not. |
| Daniel | Well, part of the benefit of that is that you are not alone. You know what happens to you partially affects other people, and people--I mean it is not like just having a classmate. It was more than that. It was a difference. Lots of classmates. |
| Mary | One benefit is that you realize you are not an island. |
| Sharon | When someone was down, being able to talk about it, and why, and raising that person's spirits. |

In supporting each other against isolation, the members of the cohort also built a high level of trust, as indicated in Table 15.

Table 15
The Cohort Function of Building Trust

| Name | Examples of building trust in the cohort |
|---|---|
| Grace | [I learned] how to work with a group of people who were predominately younger than me. That we became equals. |
| Carol | I think after a while people started to know you and your moods. They'd know what you were thinking and how you would react to things. . . . I think it's a kind of honesty and frankness that we share with each other that we may not be able to do on our jobs. |
| Daniel | We weren't competing against each other that is for sure. That element wasn't there. If you are getting an A, and I don't get an A, that wasn't an issue. We had a real relationship that we built. |
| Mary | You need to rely on others. You can't do everything yourself. This is hard for me. I've always been independent. I've done things for myself since I was in fifth or sixth grade. I was learning how to rely on others to help me. |
| Sharon | To bounce ideas off of one another, to cry on each other's shoulder. To get support from one another. It was extremely powerful. |

A concomitant product of the trust relationship that developed among the cohort interns was a pattern of behavior that was professional and collegial in nature, as indicated in Table 16.

Table 16
The Cohort Function of Fostering Collegiality

| Name | Collegial relationships among the cohort |
|---|---|
| Grace | There was another PAL person in the building. And she was teaching fifth grade. . . . So we helped each other a lot. . . So it basically was about sharing and caring and learning together, and tossing around ideas, trying new things and using them as my students. They were using me as their students. And as tutors. We became each other's tutors, paper readers. |
| Carol | It encouraged collaboration, which I'm sure a lot of us had done on our jobs, but you didn't necessarily see in undergrad programs or high school. . . In this program it was okay to share your answers or just talk about things you had done in your classroom. |
| Mary | I was learning how to rely on others to help me. |
| Sharon | Sharing some of the funny, silly, stupid things we were experiencing, either through our own mistakes . . . or just observations we were making with the atmosphere in the buildings, the classroom, the papers we had to do. |

The close relationships that developed among the members of the cohort, the collegiality, and the shared sense of an occupational identity was an instrumental aspect of their socialization into the teaching profession.

While respecting their individual differences, the members of the group also formed a strong sense of group pride and identity, comparing their cohort to a variety of closely bound groups, as indicated in Table 17.

Table 17
Metaphors for the Cohort

| Name | Metaphors for the cohort |
|---|---|
| Grace | It was like I had developed a family. The family that I had to leave at home, I developed another family. . . . They had to tolerate me. So it became my family. . . . The cohort became my family, and we helped each other. |
| Carol | It is sort of like an organization or sorority. |
| Daniel | We used the word "family." I would say it is a caring community. |
| Mary | You become close, like siblings. When there is good that is happening, you are supportive of one another. If there is bad happening, you become another support. |

(table continues)

| Name | Metaphors for the cohort |
|---|---|
| Mike | It wasn't really a team type effort. You were part of a group, but you certainly had your own individual responsibilities and concerns that you needed to be worried about and aware of. For someone who was a former athlete, like myself, it wasn't that team feeling that we needed to just pull for one another, but it was a small part of it. |
| Sharon | . . . wonderful. It was wonderful. We--There were some times we hated each other. Sometimes we fought like cats and dogs. Sometimes we got so sick of each other we just couldn't stand it any more. . . . We all feel so connected to one another in such a way that it's even hard to put into words. . . . [I gained] confidence, faith, strength, (pause) ideas, friendships, family, (pause) colleagues, yeah, all of em. |

For the members of this alternate route program, a cohort model that brought the members of the cohort together on a weekly basis became a powerful aspect of their teacher preparation program, reducing their isolation. They also developed trusting, collegial and personal relationships with each other, respecting individual differences and taking pride in their identity as a group. In addition to socializing the interns to teaching, the cohort model also served as a source of strength for its members in difficult times, and, thus, as a factor in the persistence of its members in completing the program:

> The greatest . . . support were the people in the cohort. . . . we were all supporting one another. We would call each other every night . . . (Carol)
>
> The person in the group who gave me a lot of support I would call all the time. When I considered [quitting], I would call up my friend and tell her, 'Look, I'm quitting.' (Mary)
>
> My cohort was very important. I would not have made it through without them. We were going through the same thing together. We gave each other support, spiritually and emotionally, to not give up. (Sharon)

## Summary and Discussion

Teacher preparation factors contributing to the persistence of the teachers in this study included each component of the alternate route program consisting of pre-internship course work and the internship experience. Course work was recalled by the participants as relevant and practical, transferred into short-term and long term practice. Similar to other alternate route teachers, those in this study felt well-prepared, and competent (Adelman, Michie, & Bogart, 1986; Beach et al., 1991; Guyton et al., 1991; Lutz & Hutton, 1989; SREB, 1988).

As interns, the participants in this study forged strong relationships with their on-site mentors and with each other. These relationships were critical in their development of professional skill and identity. Mentoring ensured daily contact with an experienced teacher, who provided the emotional

and technical support essential for developing competence and professional identity, similar to those alternate route programs in which mentoring has been identified as the most positive influence (Baird, 1990; Guyton et al., 1991; Knauth and Kamin, 1994; Shulman, 1989).

The cohort relationship, which the participants compared with "family," "sorority," "siblings," "caring community," and "team" was particularly important in sustaining their commitment to the program. As one participant, Sharon, summarized it, "I would not have made it through without them. We were going through the same thing together. We gave each other support, spiritually and emotionally, to not give up." Relationships between cohort members were so strong that they continued into the in-service years, and several of the teachers reported continuing bonds with others in their cohort six years into their teaching careers.

## Implications for Teacher Education

The reflections and observations of six alternatively prepared teachers who plan to remain in teaching provide evidence that preparation programs can be structured to promote success, satisfaction, and retention. That this is particularly important for teachers coming into the profession from alternate routes should be clear to program planners seeking to alleviate teacher shortages. It also may be of interest to teacher educators and school personnel who seek improvements in the status quo.

The alternate route certification program in which the individuals in this study participated effectively prepared them to feel competent and satisfied in their newly-chosen profession. Among the components of the program that contributed to their sense of professional competence were components that might be adopted successfully by other alternate route as well as traditional programs. The full-year internship, combining course work, a mentored practicum, and regular cohort meetings was a powerful mediator between previous educational and career experience and the reality of the classroom. Teacher preparation institutions may achieve positive results by expanding the current professional development school initiative. That may include requiring a more extensive internship in which course work and a practicum are interwoven, in place of the current brief experiences in student teaching, usually disconnected from course work.

The course work was universally described as practical, relevant, and transferred into practice. Learning from practitioners who modeled the teaching materials and methods that the interns then applied immediately in the contexts of their internship classrooms made the course work seem important and critical, rather than "Mickey Mouse," as the teachers in Lortie's (1975) study frequently described their courses. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on multicultural methods and materials, relevant for the contexts in which the interns were working. These features of the alternate

route program course work imply the need for strengthening the formal curriculum of teacher preparation, in terms of linking it more closely to real world classrooms. Again, the professional development school models of some institutions are addressing this need, but other programs may also benefit from employing practitioners as teachers and from requiring that some course work and student teaching be undertaken simultaneously. Certainly focusing on multicultural issues, methods, and materials is critical.

Relationships that were critical in the process of becoming an urban teacher included the relationship with the mentor and membership in the cohort. Implied in these features of the program are two recommendations. First is the need to provide sustained, supportive relationships with skilled urban teachers during the practicum. Although mentoring is frequently offered by school districts to first year teachers, the extent to which mentoring actually occurs and has an impact varies. The teachers in this study attest to that fact, in that only three were assigned a district-sponsored mentor during their first year of teaching on a contract. However, all reported valuing their internship mentors as teachers, friends, models, and counselors. It is understandably difficult to form that kind of relationship in a student teaching experience of brief duration. On the other hand, learning to teach in a year-long urban school internship under the tutelage of a skilled urban teacher may have more successful results than current models and is certainly worth exploring.

Another critical feature in the process of becoming an urban teacher for these individuals was the cohort model. Not only did the cohort enable the candidates to develop a professional identity, but also it provided a foundational set of trusting relationships in which to express their black identity. Half of the participants in this study described having felt isolated, lonely, and voiceless as undergraduates on predominantly white college campuses. All sought out black groups with which to affiliate. Later in their careers they gravitated toward black churches and other organizations to deal with bicultural stress. As interns, only one had an African American mentor. The cohort became an extended family, providing personal and professional support. This feature of the program was identified by all of the participants as a source of strength in times of stress and a primary factor in their persistence in the program. It seems reasonable, then, that teacher preparation programs, particularly those intended to prepare African American and other minority teachers, would increase participant success by organizing participants into cohorts and scheduling regular cohort meetings for reflection and interaction.

Finally, the alternate route program itself was described as the most viable option for mature adults to make the transition into a career in teaching. Although challenging and rigorous, the program was attractive because it offered individuals who had family responsibilities the opportunity to complete a career transition in a relatively short period of time, with minimal financial strain on

their families. Implied in the success of this model is a recommendation that alternate route programs can, indeed, provide a viable option for career transition, and that collaboratives of colleges of education, school districts, and state agencies desiring to increase the pool teachers to meet future demands may find success by employing such models.

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